

Norwich Teachers' League

Beth Hanlon and Stacey Hungerford, Co-Presidents

Testimony of

Beth Hanlon

Before the

Appropriations Committee

RE:

**HB 5117 AAC Portions of the State Budget Appropriating Aid to Municipalities
SB 1121 An Act Establishing A Task Force to Study the Distribution of State
Funds to Municipalities**

April 5, 2011

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Beth Hanlon. I am a resident of Norwich and a teacher in the Norwich school system, as well as co-president of the Norwich Teachers' League. Thank you for this opportunity to address the distribution of state funds in the towns where I teach and live.

I am here today to address both House Bill 5117 AAC Portions of the State Budget Appropriating Aid to Municipalities and Senate Bill 1121 An Act Establishing A Task Force to Study the Distribution of State Funds to Municipalities. My concern is that these bills do not adequately address one important piece of the State's commitment to funding local schools - the minimum level of funding a town is required to budget known as the Minimum Budget Requirement.

For example, there is a proposal in this committee (HB6385 An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of The Governor Concerning Education) that would lower the minimum budget requirement by \$3,000 for each enrollee fewer than the previous year. According to data from the Legislature's Office of Fiscal Analysis, **over \$400,000 of funding for the Norwich Public Schools could be swept from our public school budget.**

I am also concerned that the Norwich school budget has already been drastically cut. Last year, our former superintendent was forced to lay off almost twenty members, and

this year, our current superintendent will be forced to lay off another forty-five. This is in addition to the fact that the Norwich Teachers' League gave two furlough days last year in an attempt to alleviate some of the strain on the taxpayers.

However, after two years of significant budget trimming, there is simply nothing left to cut that won't impact students and their learning environment.

Our new superintendent has some wonderful ideas for the future of the Norwich Public Schools, but her vision has been hampered by the fact that our budget continually needs to be cut. I urge you to consider this information before acting on any bill that could result in the weakening of the MBR.

I would also like to stress that Norwich's student enrollment fluctuates due to its large number of students who move in and out of the district. Yet there is no consideration given to increasing the MBR for towns with increasing enrollment. This means that in times when more students attend Norwich schools, the amount per pupil could go down, taking with it needed resources.

I urge the committee to ensure that the MBR is taken into consideration regarding HB 5117 and SB 1121. And I thank the committee for allowing me to draw attention to the impact of MBR changes proposed this year on Norwich.

Thank you.